14

694.g.21.
14

A

SERMON

PREACH'D at

BOW-CHURCH, *London.*

On

MONDAY, Dec. 30. 1706.

Before the

SOCIETIES for *Reformation* of *Manners.*

Publish'd at their Request.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD *William* Nicholson
Lord Bishop of *Carlisle.*

W. Nicholson

LONDON,

Printed for *A.* and *J. Churchill*, at the *Black Swan* in *Pater-Noster-Row*, 1706-7.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON

PREACH'D at

BOW-CHURCH, *London.*

Judges V, 8.

They choſe New Gods: Then was War in the Gates.

THE Words are part of a Pſalm of Praiſe and Thanksgiving; which not only recounts the Glorious Triumph of *Deborah* and *Barak* over *Jabin* King of *Canaan*, and his General *Siſera*, but likewiſe the infinitely more valuable Conqueſt of the *Lord of Hoſts* (the King of *Iſrael*) over the Idols and Gods of the Na-

tions; Together with (their neceſſary and conſtant Attendants) Vice and Immorality. 'Twas high Time to *ſing unto the Lord a new Song*, when he had *done theſe marvellous Things*; when his *Right-Hand and his Holy Arm* had gotten him *ſuch a Victory as this*; when ſo open a Manifeſtation of his Righteouſneſs and Power was made in the ſight of the Heathen. An unqueſtionable Declaration this is of his Glory, that he is *Great and cannot worthily be praiſed*, and that he is *more to be fear'd than all Gods*: For, as for all the Nominal Gods of the Heathen, they *are but Idols*, that is (as St. *Paul* has taught us to explain the Word) they are *Nothing*; whereas 'tis *the Lord* (the One Eternal and Everlaſting God) *that made the Heavens. Glory and Worſhip are before him; Power and Honour are in his Sanctuary. Confounded* then

then *be all they that worship carved Images, and that delight in.* (senseless and insignificant Deities) *vain* Gods! *Worship Him all ye Gods*; all ye Rulers and Princes of the Earth, ye Powers and Potentates of the whole Universe.

But, Tho' *Deborah* thinks the Occasion chiefly requires the *Ascribing to the Lord the Honour due unto his Name*; yet, like a wise and compassionate Mother in *Israel*, she believes her self obliged also to take this Opportunity of giving some cautionary Warning to Posterity, the better to prevent their splitting upon those Rocks, which she has thus happily escaped. To this purpose, she makes a strict Enquiry after the principal Cause of those Wars and Calamities, which had so frequently and so strangely befallen a People to whom God had promis'd a Country of Quiet and Security, Peace

and

and Plenty; *a Land flowing with Milk and Honey.*

What the Original Contract was, whereon the Kingly Government of the *Jewiſh* Nation was founded, we find 1 *Sam.* 12, 14 and 15. *If ye will fear the Lord and ſerve him, and obey his Voice, and not rebel againſt the Commandmnt of the Lord, then ſhall both ye, and alſo the King that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God: But if ye will not obey the Voice of the Lord, but rebel againſt the Commandment of the Lord, then ſhall the Hand of the Lord be againſt you, as it was againſt your Fathers.* Upon the ſame Bottom ſtood the Authority of *Deborah* and her Predeceſſors, Judges in *Iſrael*: Under whom we meet with many Inſtances and Succeſſions of Sin and Puniſhment, Provocations and Vengeance. *When the Children of* Iſrael *forſook the Word, and ſerved* Baal *and* Aſh-

teroth,

teroth, *then was the Anger of the Lord hot againſt them, and he deliver'd them into the Hands of Spoilers that ſpoiled them: He* Sold *them into the Hands of their Enemies round about, ſo that they could not any longer ſtand before their Enemies.* Again; *When they forgat their own God, and ſerved* Baalim *and the Groves he* Sold *them into the Hand of the King of* Meſopotamia; whom they likewiſe ſerved for Eight Years following. Laſtly, to come down to the preſent Occaſion they had for *Deborah's* Help, they had a Third Time (upon *Ehud's* Death) done this very *Evil in the ſight of the Lord*; And then alſo *the Lord* Sold *them* (the juſt price of their Tranſgreſſion is always duely exacted) *into the Hand* of Jabin *King of* Canaan, who was their Revengeful *Oppreſſor Twenty Years.* In ſhort, They had ever before them (and in their own Choice)

Duty,

Duty and Diſobedience, the Worſhip of God and of Idols; and (as the proper Conſequence of each of theſe) Life and Death, Peace and War: But, *They choſe New Gods*; and *then was War in the Gates.* In handling of which Words, I ſhall conſider

I. The Sin of this People; in *chooſing New Gods.*

II. Their Puniſhment; *War in the Gates*, And,

III. Apply the whole to the Occaſion of this Day's Meeting.

I. *Firſt*, The Sin of Idolatry, the *chooſing* and worſhipping of *New* or *Strange Gods*, was certainly the moſt Daring (Impudent and Ungrateful) Affront, that the *Iſraelites* could poſſibly have put upon their Almighty Deliverer; who had ſo lately, and in ſo miraculous a manner, led them through the Sea and Wilderneſs into the Land of Pro-

Promiſe. In the way thither, and in the Midſt of thoſe powerful Wonders that he daily wrought for them, he had given them this Early Caution: *Thou ſhalt worſhip no other God; for the Lord, whoſe Name is* Jehovah, *is a jealous God,* Nay, to render their Folly ſtill the more inexcuſable, he had peremptorily aſſur'd them that Miſery and Deſtruction ſhould be the immediate Effects of their Sin: *If thine Heart turn away, ſo that thou wilt not hear, but ſhalt be drawn aſide, and worſhip other Gods and ſerve them; I denounce unto you this Day that ye ſhall ſurely periſh, and that ye ſhall not prolong your Days upon the Land whether thou paſſeſt over* Jordan *to poſſeſs it.* And, to Evidence to the whole World the reaſonable Juſtice of thus dealing with them, we are elſewhere told, That, *when the whole Land is become Brimſtone and Salt, nothing Sown nor any Graſs growing therein,* and the Queſtion ſhall be put, *wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto*

this Land? What meaneth the Heat of this great Anger? Then Men shall say, Because they have forsaken the Covenant of the Lord God of their Fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt: *For they went and served other Gods, and worshipped them; Gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them.*

One sort of Idolatry there is to which there seems to be a more than ordinary Disposition and Propensity in Humane Nature; and there's a particular Warning given us of the Hazard we are in of being overcome by the Temptation, *Deut.* 4, 15 and 19. *Take good Heed unto your selves, lest thou lift thine Eyes unto Heaven; and when thou seest the Sun, and the Moon and the Stars, even all the Host of Heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided* (or, communicated) *unto all Nations under the whole Heaven.* And yet, even before the handing down of this Law by *Moses*, Holy

Job (generally suppos'd to be an Elder Writer than He) had truly discover'd the gross Impiety of such a Practice: *If* (says he, *Ch.* 31, 26. &c.) *I beheld the Sun when it shined, or the Moon walking in Brightness; and my Heart hath been secretly enticed, or my Mouth hath kissed my Hand, this also were an Iniquity to be punished by the Judge: For I should have deny'd the God that is above.*

But this Iniquity (Great and Damnable as it is) comes far short of that of *Israel*'s *Choosing*, or rather worshipping by whole Sale, all the *New Gods* of the Nations round about; a large Catalogue whereof we have, by Name, in this Book of *Judges*. The very Number of these confutes their Divinity, and shews there was as great a Want of Thought, as of Duty and Religion, in their Adorers. Can the incommunicable Name of the Almighty One be indifferently claim'd by all the Mock-Deities

of *Syria* and *Zidon*, of *Moab*, *Ammon* and the *Philistines*? How feeble their Title is to Omnipotency and Infinite Wisdom, we shall best discern by bringing them to the Prophet's Test; *Isaiah* 41, 22, &c. *Let them bring forth their strong Reasons, and shew us what shall happen; Let them shew the former Things what they be, that we may consider them and know the latter End of them. Shew the Things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods. Yea, do Good or do Evil; that we may be dismay'd and behold it together.* If these Demands are not answer'd, the Conclusion (surely) is most undeniable: *Behold ye are of nothing, and your Work is naught; an Abomination is he that chooseth you. And Thou, O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the Cherubims, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the Kingdoms of the Earth. Thou hast made Heaven and Earth.*

In these latter Ages of the World, the Dregs of Time into which we are fallen, there

there are some that teach their Proselytes to distinguish betwixt the ultimate or determinate End of Divine Worship, and its immediate Object; affirming that 'tis not only lawful, but a necessary Duty, to commit the Conveyance of our most solemn Devotions to departed Saints, Images and Reliques. I do not doubt but that the towering Idolatry of the *Israelites*, had its first Foundations laid upon some such false Doctrines as these; and that the *Jewish* Apostats, as well as the *Roman*, bedaub'd the Second Commandment with their Oily (smooth and shining) Glosses, before they wholly laid it aside. But, if the Men of *Judah* and *Jerusalem* will not be jealous of the Purity of *their* Worship, as they know their God is of *his* Honour, with what an irresistible and bewitching Force does Idolatry break in upon them. Having once allow'd themselves to step out of the way that was first given them to walk in, there is

after-

afterwards no End of their Wandrings; and every Thing they ſee has as good a Right to be called God and to be worſhip'd, as any thing. And now (as the *Wiſdom of Solomon* has elegantly deſcrib'd their ſtupid Condition) *for Health, they call upon that which is weak; for Life, they pray to that which is Dead; for Aid, they humbly beſeech that which hath leaſt Means to Help; for a good Journey, they beg of that which cannot ſet a Foot forward; And for Gaining and Getting, for good Succeſs of their Hands, ask Ability to do of him who is moſt unable to do any thing.* In another Place, the ſame Wiſe Man gives us the like Account of the miſerable End and Concluſion of theſe Rebellious Courſes: *When Men,* ſays he, *have gone aſtray very far in the ways of Error, and held them for Gods, which even amongſt the Beaſts of their Enemies were deſpiſed, being deceiv'd as Children of no Underſtanding, God firſt ſends to them (as to Children without the Uſe of Reaſon) ſome leſſer*

leſſer Judgment to mock them; but they that will not be reform'd by that Correction, wherein he dallies with them, ſhall feel a Judgment worthy of God. And this is what the Text

II. *Secondly* propoſes to our Conſideration, that ſevere and terrible Puniſhment, which was inflicted upon the Idolatrous People: *They choose New Gods; then was War in the Gates.* When King *David* (amongſt the other Infirmities of his declining Years) was tempted to number the People, 'twas not long before *his own Heart ſmote him*; being quickly made ſenſible of the Ingratitude, as well as Infidelity, of thus putting his Truſt and Confidence in the weak Arm of Fleſh, inſtead of relying upon that of the Almighty, which had hitherto brought him ſo great Salvation. The firſt reflecting Thought that he has upon the Matter, brings him to this Confeſſion: *I have ſinned greatly, becauſe I have done this Thing; but now I beſeech thee, O Lord, do away the Iniquity of thy*

thy Servant, for I have done very fooliſhly. Upon former Humiliations, Mercy had been found; nor is it now to be deſpair'd of: But let it be remember'd, That God's Juſtice is alſo to have Right done it; and that Correction precedes Remiſſion of Sins, in the common Methods of his Dealings with the Sons of Men. *Go* then *and tell* David, *ſaying, Thus ſaith the Lord, I offer thee Three Things; Chooſe one of them, that I may do it unto thee: Either Three Years Famine; or Three Months to be deſtroyed before thy Foes, whilſt the Sword of thine Enemies overtaketh thee; or (laſtly) Three Days Peſtilence in the Land, and the Angel of the Lord deſtroying throughout all the Coaſts of* Iſrael. What a lamentable and aſtoniſhing Choice is here? And, what Wonder can it be to hear that *David* is *in ſtraits*, and at a Loſs, what to reſolve on? And yet, when the firſt ſhocks of Horror are over (when his Fears are a little abated, and the Succors of Reaſon call'd in) 'tis eaſily

easily seen which of these dismal Evils is the least terrifying; And, by Consequence, the most readily (I cannot say to be desired, but) to be submitted to. Why, *Let me fall into the Hand of the Lord*; for *very great are his Mercies*: *But let me not fall into the Hand of Man*, whose most tender Mercies are cruel.

The ordinary Calamities of War, in the General, are allotted as common Punishments for all manner of Transgressions of the Law of God, *Levit.* 26. 15, &c. If *Ye shall despise my Statutes, or if your Soul abhor my Judgments, so that ye will not do all my Commandments, but that ye break my Covenant*; *I will set my Face against you, and ye shall be slain before your Enemies*: *They that hate you shall reign over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.* In Observance of this Treaty, the Commissions of Destruction are issu'd from on High; nor can any Powers here below hinder the full Execution of them. *O thou Sword of the Lord* (says the Prophet)

how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thy self into thy Scabbard; Rest, and be still. Yet, *How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a Charge against* Ashkelon, *and against the Sea-shore? There hath he appointed it.*

But; It ought to be observ'd that the Scourge of *Israel* in the Text is of an extraordinary kind: And that, as Idolatry is a Sin of the tallest Growth, so here's the most terrible and amazing sort of War (*War in the Gates*) assigned for its Punishment. And, was it not in *the Gates, at the Entry of the City, that Wisdom us'd to cry, and Understanding to put forth her Voice?* Was it not in these that their Judges were commanded to *Execute the Judgment of Truth and Peace?* Zach. 8. 16. So that *War in the Gates* is an Utter-silencing of all the Laws of the State, an entire Subversion of all Courts of Judicature, and a confused Jumble of every Man's Property and private Possession: And where shall we ever meet with a more lively Repre-

sentation,

ſentation, than this is, of Hell upon Earth? That Deſcription which the Prophet *Joel* (Chap. 2.) gives us of the Rage of Armies, fluſh'd with Victory and Spoil, is Natural enough: *A Fire devoureth before them, and behind them a Flame burneth: The Land is as the Garden of* Eden *before them, and behind them a deſolate Wilderneſs, and nothing can eſcape them: Before their Faces the People are much pained, all Faces gathering Blackneſs: They run to and fro in the City; they run upon the Walls; they climb upon the Houſes, and they enter in at the Windows like Thieves.* The Prophet, we ſee, here repreſents the Pillaging of a Town, taken by Storm, as a Thing that looks ſomewhat *like* Theft; And 'tis indeed as *like* it, as the putting of Innocent Women and Children to the Sword (on the ſame Occaſions) is *like* Murder: But *Jus Belli*, or the Law of Arms, gives other Names to theſe Practices; And, however we may ſhrink at the Hearing of them ſo much as ſpoken

of in the Days of Peace, a Time of War will change those Notions that we now have of their Nature, and render them our familiar Acquaintance.

From the Account that has hitherto been given of the disastrous Effects of War, it ought not to be inferr'd that all martial Men and Things are to be Condemn'd; as wholly inconsistent with the peaceable Institutions of Religion, and the meek Powers of Godliness. Far from it. The Doctrine of our Holy Mother, the Establish'd Church of *England*, is very plain and express on the other hand: Affirming (in Her 37*th Article*) That, *It is Lawful for Christian Men, at the Commandment of the Magistrate, to wear Weapons, and to serve in the Wars.* This, as well as the rest, She learn'd from the first Great *Author and Finisher of Her Faith*: Whose Forerunner (*Luke* 3. 14.) advised those Soldiers, that came to him for Baptism, to *be content with their Wages*; which necessarily implies an Allow-

Allowance of their continuing in their preſent Employments and Profeſſions: And our Bleſſed Lord himſelf (*Act.* 10.) ſends *Cornelius* the Centurion to be Baptized of *Peter*, without the leaſt inſiſting upon the throwing up of his Commiſſion.

Kings and Rulers, 'tis true, have the Title of *Gods* given them in Holy Writ; becauſe of that Divine Authority, wherewith they are inveſted: But, as we are ſure that they *Die like* other *Men*, ſo we likewiſe aſſuredly know that they do alſo live like them. Having been Originally form'd out of the ſame common Maſs of Earth and Clay, they are ſubject to the ſame Infirmities and Paſſions with the reſt of Mankind; too frequently hurry'd on, by Avarice and Ambition, to the Invading of their Neighbour's Property, and the removing of his Land-Marks. From theſe prevailing Frailties (incident to every Condition of Humane Nature, High and Low) proceed thoſe mutual

Jea-

Jealouſies that are amongſt Princes; which neceſſarily ſet them on their Guards, Intrench'd in their ſtrong Holds, and ſurrounded with ſuch an Armed Force, as ſome of them think ſufficient for the Enlargement, and others for the Defence, of their reſpective Borders. Our Gracious and Merciful Creator did certainly (as the Preacher obſerves, *Eccl.* 7. 29.) *make Man upright*, of a juſt and ſociable Temper: *But*, as he there goes on, *they have* (of themſelves) *ſought out many Inventions*. The Fall of our Firſt Parents threw an untoward Sowerneſs, or Leaven, into our Conſtitution; which has ever ſince fermented into irregular and preternatural Motions towards War, Vengeance and Confuſion: And therefore a *State of War*, is not (as ſome of our late Politicians have affirm'd it to be) the very State of Man's pure and primitive Nature; but 'tis the unhappy Conſequence, and proper Puniſhment, of that voluntary Corruption, which the Eating

ing of the forbidden Fruit has brought upon it.

Having thus far consider'd the most heinous Offence, and proportionable Punishment of the Children of *Israel*, in that Order wherein they ly before us in the Text, 'tis now Time to bring the Matter home to our selves; by remembring that this part of the Sacred History, as well as others, was written for our Admonition. Let us then

III. In the *Third* and last Place, apply the whole to the Occasion of our this Day's Meeting together. And that chiefly by calling to our Remembrance that our Great Apostle (the Apostle of the Gentiles) has assur'd us that *Covetousness* is also *Idolatry*; and that his Spirit has elsewhere given this very Name to *Stubbornness*, or a Heady and stiff Pursuit of our own Sinful Lusts and Affections. The Truth is, Whatever we *love with all our Heart, with all our Mind, and with all our Strength*, we make

make that *our God*; and we are *it's People*: And St. *James* has demonſtrated that this ſort of Idolatry produces the ſame Effects with the former. *From whence*, ſays he, *come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your Luſts that War in your Members? Ye Luſt, and have not: Ye Kill, and deſire to have; and cannot obtain: Ye Fight and War, yet ye have not; becauſe ye ask not: Ye ask, and obtain not; becauſe ye ask amiſs, that you may conſume it upon your Luſts.*

Now; If, inſtead of making God their Strength and the Horn of their Salvation, Men will put their Confidence in the fading Poſſeſſions (and more fading Pleaſures) of this vain Life, no Marvail if the Almighty *ſcatters them among all People, from the one End of the Earth under the other*: Where their Rebellious Choice becomes their Juſt Puniſhment, and they are now *forced to ſerve other Gods, which neither they nor their Fathers had known.* Before the Sons of *Jacob* were capable of falling entirely

in

in with the Heathen worſhip, it was neceſſary for them to quit & throw of their own Moral (as well as Ceremonial) Law; and to indulge themſelves in a general Looſeneſs of Manners, in order to their coming up (by more eaſy Steps) to that height of Lewdneſs, which they were afterwards to commit *in the Groves, and under every green Tree.*

And did not the ſinful People of this Nation follow the *Men of Iſrael* in theſe very *ways that lead to Death*, till they had brought themſelves within View (and to the hazardous Brink) of the ſame *Pit of Deſtruction*? When after the miſerable Confuſions of our late Days of Rebellion and Anarchy, God was wonderfully pleas'd to reſtore us to our Ancient Government in the State, together with the primitive Purity of Doctrine and Diſcipline in the Church, what an ungrateful Return did we make for ſo ſurprizing a Mercy? Inſtead of Humbling our ſelves for our former Tranſgreſſions, and Bleſſing that Almighty Arm which had wrought

ſo Great a Salvation for us, an Univerſal Luxury and Prophaneneſs overſpread the Face of the whole Land, in Court and Country: Till, by a long Habitual Courſe of Vice and Immorality, we began to be ripen'd (in the following Reign) towards a Relapſe into the Idolatrous Backſlidings of our Forefathers, and to Sacrifice again to the *Roman Molock*; being unmindful of the *Rock that had begotten* us to a more *Saving Faith*, and forgetting the *God that had form'd us* to a Better and more lively Worſhip.

And has not our Condemnation prov'd the ſame with that of *Iſrael* under the like Circumſtances? When God *ſaw this*, did he not *abhor* us? Said he not, *I will hide my Face from them; and will ſee what their End will be: For they are a froward Generation, Children in whom there is no Faith?* As we then mov'd him to Jealouſy with that which *was not God*, and provok'd him to Anger with our Vanities, ſo has he ever ſince *provok'd us to Anger with a Fooliſh* (that is, an Idolatrous) *Nation*: And, for almoſt Twenty Years paſt,

paſt, the Sword without, and Terror within, has been our conſtant Portion.

In the midſt of our Diſtreſſes, God was graciouſly (and even miraculouſly) pleas'd to raiſe up for us a mighty Deliverer; at a Time when there ſeem'd to be *none nigh that could help us*, or that *cared for our Souls*. This Great Prince, whoſe whole Life was ſpent in ſuccouring the Afflicted, bravely undertook our Ranſom; and, with a Succeſs anſwerable to the wonderful Enterprize, quickly lop'd off the Top-Branches of our now flouriſhing Idolatry and Superſtition: But the Root of all our Evils, and the Seed of our Corruption, lay ſtill hid and ſcatter'd in the Soil; and the weeding out of theſe was yet farther neceſſary for the perfecting of our Cure, and the effectual Freeing of us from the Danger of a future Relapſe. As long as *Blaſphemies againſt the moſt* High were ſo loud in our Streets, and the whiſpering Allurements of *the Adulterous Women* ſo rife in the Corners thereof, there could be no Secu-

rity againſt a Return to our *Whoring after other Gods*; nor any encouraging View of our being wholly out of Love with our former Abominations.

The Firſt tolerable Proſpect (I may venture to ſay it!) that we had, of our being *Snatch'd as a Brand out of this Fire*, was given us by thoſe Generous and Religious Heroes, who (having form'd themſelves into ſeveral Holy Confederacies, or, *Societies of Reformation*) came timely in to our Reſcue; And, in the moſt prevailing Manner, taught us the Happy Method of *working out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. They knew that it was indeed a part of our Daily Prayer, *Give Peace in our Time, O Lord; becauſe there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God*: But they were (withal) ſenſible that the Anſwer, which the Lively Oracles had always given to that Petition, was this, *There is no Peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked*. They had Read, That when the *Children of Iſrael put away the ſtrange Gods from among them,*

and

and ſerved the Lord, then was his Soul grieved for the Miſeries of his People; So that he quickly *deliver'd them out of the hand of their Enemies*: And they hoped, That if We likewiſe forſook the Evil of our ways, and turn'd to our deſpis'd God with all our Souls, he would alſo deliver us *from our ſtrongeſt Enemy, and from all thoſe that hated us*; tho', as yet, they ſeemed to be *too mighty for us.*

To this good Purpoſe, with a *Zeal according to Knowledge* and an invincible Bravery, they reſolv'd that the many Excellent Laws which we had, for the due Puniſhment of all ſort of Irreligious Offenders, ſhould no longer remain a *Dead Letter*: But, that our Civil Magiſtrates (who, in a great Meaſure, had hitherto *born the Sword* of Juſtice *in vain*) ſhould now be ſufficiently enabled to become a *Terror to Evil Works*, by the neceſſary Aſſiſtance of ſuch as would be always in Readineſs to accuſe and proſecute the Criminals. An Undertaking, this was, which was ſure to encounter (as

it

it did) with a very formidable Oppoſition; having all the United Forces of the Devil, the World and the Fleſh, in Array againſt it: And yet thro' the powerful Influences of his Spirit, who firſt vanquiſh'd all theſe in his own Perſon, *making a Shew of them openly and Triumphing over them*, the Glorious Deſign has thus far proved effectual in *Turning us from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God.*

Inſtead of our heretofore *Wallowing* in our Sins, and that *Overflowing of Ungodlineſs*, which had ſo long prevail'd amongſt us, an ardent and affectionate Zeal for Religion, and the Ordinances of our God began to kindle in our Breaſts; and, ſoon after, openly manifeſted it ſelf in the growing Powers thereof. Our Churches were every where crowded, our publick Communions frequented, ſuch Numbers of Charity-Schools erected, evidently ſhew'd that the Divine Spirit *wrought together* with ours, and was *Mighty* in us towards the *pulling down* of all the *ſtrong Holds* of that

Law

Law of Sin, which had hitherto ruled *in our Members*. Upon this General Reformation, the Almighty himſelf was immediately pleas'd to appear in the *Midſt of our Congregations*; and the *Lord of Hoſts ſet up his Banners*, as ſure *Tokens* that here he had a *Delight to dwell*. From hence he *ſent out his Arrows*, and *ſcatter'd our Enemies that delighted in War*; Having now, in an Annual Courſe of moſt Aſtoniſhing Victories, *broken the Teeth of the Ungodly and Malicious*, and *ſmitten* them ſo as that *they are not able to ſtand* any more, but continually *fall under our Feet*.

Bleſſed (for ever Bleſſed) be ye of the Lord, who have thus *ſhined as Lights in the midſt of a Crooked and perverſe Generation!* Who, in Spight of all the ſullen Diſcouragements of a Licentious Age, have perſiſted in your good Services for the *Houſe of your God, and for the Offices thereof*; Until, not only the diſtant Corners of this Iſland, but even moſt of the Proteteſtant Countries of Chriſtendom, have happily

happily follow'd your Great Example! On ſuch laſting Foundations as theſe may the future Peace of this Church and Kingdom be ſo ſecurely Eſtabliſhed, as that we may never more have Occaſion to be *afraid of the Arrow that flyeth by Day, nor of the Peſtilence that walketh in the Night-Seaſon!* At leaſt; If (after all theſe your moſt worthy *Labours of Love*) the *Diſtreſs of Nations* ſtill continues, and the *Riſing of Kingdoms againſt Kingdoms*, do ye however (with a becoming Faith and Cheerfulneſs) *look up, and lift up your Heads: For*, in all Probability, *your Redemption draweth nigh.* Theſe are ſome of thoſe comforting Tokens, which your Redeemer has given you of the Son of Man's Second *Coming*, *in the Clouds, with Power and great Glory*: And 'tis from this Coming alone that ye expect that *Peace which the World cannot give.* In the World ye are ſure of Tribulations, War, Anguiſh and Sorrow: But (to your unſpeakable Support; under all theſe Sufferings) ye know that *He has overcome the World*: And ye know likewiſe, That, *when he ſhall appear, ye ſhall be like him; for ye ſhall ſee him as he is.*

To Him therefore (with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Three Perſons in One Eternal Godhead, the Almighty Soveraign *God of Gods, and Lord of Lords*) be aſcribed all Glory and Honour, Praiſe and Dominion, now and for ever, *Amen.*

FINIS.